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Truth & the First Lie

September 7, 2008

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Genesis 3:1-13

To tell the truth, I wasn't looking forward to preaching on "the truth of God." It just didn't sound very exciting! For some reason, we have this twisted idea that the real adventure in life lies *outside* of God's truth, and living within God's truth is booo-ring. For some reason, we are more ready to believe lies than truth. For some reason, following "the truth" sounds boring, and turning away from God sounds more intriguing and adventurous... But what if we've got it backwards? What if following God's truth is where the true adventure is? What if, when you follow God's truth, God will take you places you never could have imagined, in ways you never knew existed?

If that's the case, then we in the church have some explaining to do. Why is it that people think Christ-followers are more boring than crazy? After all, people assume if you're a good Christian, you go to church and...sit. And if you're really committed, you join a committee, where you go and...sit. For some reason, we have this twisted idea that the real adventure in life lies outside of God's truth. But you know, we've been like that since the beginning...

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. The serpent had the gift of craftiness. Look how subtle the serpent is: It's all under the radar. How many people here today are suffering and struggling under the radar, caught, unaware of the lies they are basing major decisions upon? And it caught Eve unaware. Now, humans have the gift of fellowship, and the gift of surviving craftiness. So notice how he gets Eve alone. He isolates Eve from Adam, so there's no opportunity to strengthen each other. Isn't that like sin? When you're alone, without support, is when you get picked off. Think of the last time you were tempted. Were you alone, or with other Christ followers? Now listen to what the serpent asks.

*He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" "Did God really say...?" (as if God would have said something else). His question leaves gaps...maybe God doesn't know what's best. **Sin always leaves gaps.***

*2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Before we go on, let's put to rest a big question: **Why would God even put the tree of knowledge of good & evil there?** It was not a trap or a test; it was a necessity, given the fact that God created humanity in His own image. We were created physical, spiritual, relational and moral beings. Without the tree, Adam and Eve would've had no choice; just puppets, with nothing of God's image like valuing, loving, choosing between good and bad, or being creative. To be truly like God, Adam and Eve had to have the choice and opportunity to choose.*

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The serpent is basically saying "God lies! God doesn't want you to eat, because "You will be like God..." It's the ultimate irony. They already WERE like God! Genesis 1:26 tells it "So God created humanity in God's own image, in the image of God

He created them; male and female He created them.” Do you see what’s happened? **The best lies take great truths and twist them.** Through the course of this small dialogue, Eve began thinking “Is God withholding information from me???” Nothing is worse than the feeling that someone’s withholding information from me. As the dad of 4 kids including Hunter who’s now a freshman, it is frustrating when you ask them what happened at school today and they say “nothing…” That’s how Eve must have been feeling when the serpent took the next step.

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Satan gets Eve to focus on the desirable thing – the fruit. “There’s no harm in looking” is utterly false. Temptation often comes through the eyes. And men especially respond visuals. That’s why TV is so powerful. That’s why pornography is so aimed at men, because of the visual nature of men. 1 John 2:16 *“For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does— comes not from the Father but from the world.”* When the first lie led us away from God’s truth, even our senses became distorted – our eyes especially. The sin isn’t just “out there.” Then the Bible says *“And she ate.”* What happens next? Eve gives it to Adam. In one and the same verse, Satan turns the sinner into the seducer. Maybe you’ve been eyeing something lately. You know it’s not God’s best for you, but it’s one of those “harmless sins” that doesn’t affect anyone else. Hear me please: Don’t think you can choose to sin and not have it adversely affect those around you. People like to drag other people down with them – for company, if nothing else.

What next? *7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* Well, their eyes were opened. They were experiencing sin that leads to death. They knew they were naked and felt *guilty*. So, **THEY TRY TO HIDE IT:** That was our first attempt at covering up our sin, guilt and shame. So many of us are in this stage – “just don’t let ‘em see you sweat.” We deny it, we cover it up with nice things like trips and cars and fancy homes, we try to distract other people and ourselves from the guilt and pain caused by our sin. Sometimes it works. But hear this: No human effort can hide sin from God. Adam and Eve realize that they can’t cover up their sin and shame, so instead, they hide themselves. They heard God and ran for cover. For the first time in their lives, they feared God. *Before* sin, hearing God’s voice was awesome. Hearing God’s voice was their joy and delight. All God was asking is “*Where are you?*” He was lost, that’s where he was. If you are in the hide & seek game with God, give up! Especially if someone is praying for you – give up, because you can’t cover it up. Especially if it’s your mom or grandma. Give up! Because she doesn’t know how to shut up, so you might as well give up. ☺ And her prayer is 100% in God’s will. God specializes in finding us. The question isn’t whether or not God will find us. The only question now, is will God find us in our *sin*, or will He find us in the *forgiveness* He offers? I wonder who among us is God lovingly calling “Where are you?” Maybe today is your day. You can put your faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ!

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Here’s Adam’s reply. He’s using words that never existed before: *“I heard, I was afraid, I hid!”* For the first time in the universe we hear words like “afraid, hid myself, “shame.” God’s original design—God’s truth— does not include those words, but the broken relationship leads immediately to words like those. Ain’t that the truth? The brokenness leads to words like “afraid, hiding, and shame.” And what does God say?

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" And what does God say? *“Who told you?” “Who told you?”* Now listen to this: **There is nothing we know, except what we’ve been told.** Truth be told. Who’s been telling you stuff? Where do we get our information? It all comes from someone else: word of mouth person to person, broadcast from a person, written down by a person. Is it truth? Are you believing them? Who have you been talking to? What are you watching? Who told us about ourselves and others? When we begin listening to lies, the consequences can be terrible. Millions of Jews killed just 60 years ago, because of a lie. Millions of Tutsi Rwandans just 10 years ago, because of a lie that the shape of one’s nose determines how people are to be

treated. Thousands of terrorism victims even today, all killed because someone told them something like “You are superior. They are a threat. You aren’t good enough. You must kill.” The underlying messages are surprisingly sick and simple – even ridiculous. **What “truths” have you let influence your thinking, and where did they come from?** Remember there’s nothing we know, except what we’ve been told.

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me-- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Not only the first lie, but the first ever round of the blame game.☺ He doesn’t confess, he blames. Could he have come up with anything *meaner*? The woman You gave me (Blaming God), she gave me the fruit (blaming Eve), and I ate (finally confessing it). If you are in the mode of regularly blaming *other* people for your troubles, consider that a warning: you sound an awful lot like Adam caught in the very first sin. Look and see who you are listening to.

Understanding this first lie is important, because it opened up so many things that even today keep you from the real adventure God is calling you on. **Behind every action is a belief.** I’m going to get a divorce. I’m going to get drunk. I’m going to lie. I’m going to sit back. I’m going to blame someone else. Your actions are based on the belief: What I’m doing will make me happier than what God says. If you go have sex outside of marriage there’s a belief about that that’s causing you to do it. We act on the belief “I’m going to be happier disobeying God than obeying him.” That’s the belief. And there’s a belief behind everything you do.

Behind every sin is a lie that I’m believing. When you sin, at that moment, you think it’s the best thing to do. “Why did I exaggerate just then? Why did I lie just then? Why did I cover up just then? Why did I accuse just then?” Because at that moment I thought it was the best thing to do. It was a lie, but I had been deceived. We can see the behavior. The question is, what is the lie behind our actions? When you see someone who is arrogant and prideful, what is the lie that they are believing?

Change always starts in the mind. All through the Scripture. “*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” The way you think determines the way you feel. The way you feel determines how you act. We must change our beliefs first. The battle for sin always starts in the mind. You must see the lie you are believing. What is the false lie you are believing? And then will you commit to God’s truth?

The Bible word for changing your mind is “repentance.” (This isn’t the guy on the soapbox in the diaphragm with the sign saying “Turn or burn!”) The word in scripture isn’t “change your behavior.” It is *meta-noia*. Change your mind. Changing your beliefs, your values, the way you look at life. The modern word for repentance is “paradigm shift.”

Three chapters from the beginning of the Bible the serpent appears for the first time; three chapters from the end of the Bible he is seen for the last time. The results of his work are seen on every page in between. And every time it goes something like it did in the Garden:

When they fell, Adam and Eve sure experienced a “paradigm shift.” The account ends in tragedy: Adam and Eve leave the Garden in exile, with curses of toil and pain. *But also with God naming his plan for calling them home*, even within his judgment. God is a God of justice: After the sin, God asked no more questions. He judged Satan then and there and declared war upon him. And in the declaration, Adam and Eve heard the Gospel message for the very first time. Why? Because God is also a God of mercy. Genesis 3:15 “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*” It was the very first promise and prophecy in the Bible. Humanity itself would be the instrument through which God would work for Satan’s defeat and doom. God would become a Man to accomplish his victory. And one really unique thing: When this was recorded, it was always the offspring of the man that the generations were traced. The fact that the prophecy names the “*offspring of the woman,*” leads many scholars to believe it to be a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus, who would put a final end to both sin and Satan by his death on the cross. His “heel was struck,” while at the same time he applied the crushing death blow to Satan’s head.

Sin is real. Sin sends out lies to us. We've been fed the lie that the true adventure lies in the gaps outside of God's will. Remember God's question "Who told you?" Who have you been listening to?" The only solution for your situation is a change of mind. Quit hiding. God can't help but offer you his best, and that's His Son, Jesus. Believe in God. Receive his messages of faith, hope, love and forgiveness. And then live out the adventure of God's truth. It's what you were made for!

Study Guide

Monday: Today, relax and take an assessment. How are you doing on the spiritual disciplines we looked at this summer?

Intimacy with God
Self-control

Simplicity
Sacrifice

Silence & Solitude

Surrender Prayer

Humility

Pick one and practice right now.

Tuesday: Read Genesis 1—3. Take time to review the sermon notes. They had it perfect. They were able to live in God's presence. Then "it" happened. Take a look at your own life. What do you do when you find yourself caught in a mistake or sin? (Hide? Blame someone else? Find a fig leaf? Or allow God to clothe you?) What is the worst thing about disobeying God? (the guilt? The fact that it was so easy? How it affects your relationships? Or simply the idea of displeasing God?) Pray that God would seek you through that thing.

Tuesday: Read Psalm 25. Read it as your prayer to God today. Pay close attention to v.4. Reflect specifically on verse 20: "*May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.*" Integrity is who you are when no one's looking. We often use lies to protect ourselves. What if we thought of the truth as our protection instead? What do you need most today? Protection, guidance, or forgiveness? Pray that God's truth and your integrity to it will hold you safely.

Wednesday: Read John 3:19—21. This is what Jesus says to Nicodemus. Remember this is right after Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. How many lies does it take before you want to hide in the dark? What lies do you need to lay aside in order to avoid being seduced again by the darkness? Ask God to give you the will to lay aside the lure, that you can live free in Him.

Thursday: Read Exodus 20:3—17. Speaking of truth, who laid the law in your home? Focus on the first commandment. What has replaced God's reign in your life? What do you love more than God? Lay that at the altar of your heart before God, and give it back to Him.

Friday: Read Deuteronomy 6:4—9. And reflect. How do you demonstrate your love for God? Reread verse 5 again. Now, go out and do something for someone else, or for yourself, to show your love for God for them.